

VZCZCXRO8215
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHKKH #1122 2091349
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 271349Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1433
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 001122

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SPLM SG OPTIMISTIC ON ELECTION COMMISSION CREATION

1. (SBU) SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum told ConGen Juba July 23 that he was confident the National Elections Commission (NEC) would be established and operable before the end of August. The National Congress Party has already finalized its list of candidates, and allowed three names to be disqualified on the grounds that they were "partisan." Moreover, he contended, the ICC's application for an arrest warrant against President Bashir guaranteed the NEC's establishment because, "he will be doing everything possible to continue to look presidential - to demonstrate he is not intimidated by international opinion, and that his government will weather the storm." Amum was dismissive of conjecture that further ICC development's risked Sudan's demise. "People said that after the death of John Garang, yet the nation has survived."

2. (SBU) The SPLM has not yet finalized its NEC list and continues to be tight-lipped about potential candidates. Amum noted that all parties have agreed on the necessity of avoiding a "public vetting" of NEC members prior to their appointment - a political ceasefire meant to reduce tensions ahead of probable squabbles over census results and the electoral timeline itself.

3. (SBU) The recently passed National Elections Law states that "impartial, national figures" must be appointed by President Bashir to fill the nine commission seats. Pressed on whether there was space for neutrality in Sudanese politics, Amum responded that it was possible - selecting candidates was complicated only by the need to identify those "presently apolitical," and a candidate's past political aspirations or positions were not necessarily disqualifying factors. He allowed, for instance, that erstwhile (Hh)Qqn VQQQM%QQQQJl %QI\Y[XZ+QQsuch a figure despite his appearance at the SPLM Convention, and was likely to be offered a seat on the Commission.

4. (SBU) Comment: The final disposition of the SPLM list will not occur before the end of this weekend's Political Bureau meeting. This is the first session of the SPLM's senior-most leadership body since May's National Convention, and features returning party luminaries such as Nhial Deng Nhial, who had previously gone into self imposed exile over disagreements with Kiir on SPLM policy and concerns about corruption. This effort by the SPLM to come together to push ahead on elections gives some hope that Sudan may yet hold them before the close of 2009, though it is also possible that the SPLM leadership will spend much of this weekend discussing strategy with regard to the ICC indictment as well as Darfur strategy following President Bashir's trip there last week. The ICC issue continues to suck the oxygen out of many issues that are important to the SPLM, including the naming of an interim administration for Abyei.

FERNANDEZ